DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 147 325 TM 006 592

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TITLE An Interviewer's Basic Handbook.
INSTITUTION Ohio Valley Regional Medical Program, Lexington, Ky.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 70
NOTE 41p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Confidentiality; Data Collection; *Guides; *Interviews; Public Relations; *Question Answer Interviews; *Questioning Techniques; Questionnaires; Research Problems; Sampling; *Surveys

ABSTRACT

This brief guide to interview training in survey research is designed for persons without previous training or experience in interviewing. Basic techniques of interviewing are presented in such a manner as to facilitate the training of persons with varying educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Topics include: the interviewer's role in the survey, obtaining the interview, introducing the interview, choosing the place for the interview, handling refusals, asking the questions, recording the answers, closing the interview, and handling special problems. A brief bibliography and a glossary of interviewing terms are appended. (Author/BV)

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AN INTERVIEWER'S BASIC HANDBOOK

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AN INTERVIEWER'S BASIC HANDBOOK

Craig Love

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FOREWORD

This work is intended as a guide for interview training in survey research. In particular, it is aimed at persons without previous training or experience in interviewing, such as residents of local communities or students. The objective of the guide is to acquaint the trainee with the basic fundamentals and techniques of interviewing and is presented in such a manner as to facilitate the training of persons with varying educational and socio-economic backgrounds.

This publication is neither a text nor a complete and exhaustive manual for training professional interviewers. Anyone who is involved in large scale surveys and particularly those responsible for training interviewers, should review the many basic texts and other technical works on survey research and interviewing.

Craig Love (now completing a doctorate program in experimental psychology) prepared the guide for his own use in training local persons as interviewers for a health survey carried out with OVRMP support in a remote Appalachian area during the summer of 1970. There, and elsewhere since, it has been used quite successfully in training persons with limited educational background and no previous experience in interviewing.

It is our hope that this monograph will be of value to still others and that it find utility in a variety of survey settings.

Donald K. Freeborn, Ph.D.
Associate Director
Ohio Valley Regional Medical Program

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks are due to Donald Freeborn, Ph.D. for his interest and encouragement and many helpful suggestions. Considerable assistance was also provided by other members of the Ohio Valley Regional Medical Program staff, especially Dave Rowden, Anne Cook, Wanda Estep and Sharon Evans.

Craig Love

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INTRODUCTION

What is science? Most people think of science as involving a man in a white coat doing mysterious experiments which may seem like some kind of magic. What science is really all about is less glamorous and exciting than all that. The scientist tries to find out something by studying it in a systematic way. For example, if he is studying various brands of gasoline to find out which brand provides the best mileage in a car, the scientist assures himself that he understands the results of his experiment in several ways. He uses the same car, the same trained driver (who has constant driving habits) and runs the car over the same road until the car runs out of gas. This scientist is doing the same thing you and I do (observing and testing things) except he goes to greater lengths to assure himself, as in this example, that the results of his observations are due to the gasoline and nothing else.

As an interviewer you are participating in a scientific project. You and your fellow interviewers will all try to obtain certain information from the respondents (people being interviewed) in a manner similar to the scientist studying the gasolines. In the process of training you will learn to ask the questions in the same way, in the same order, and to follow the same procedures. Why do an interview? We have some things to find out about the people in this area. The best way to find out is to ask them, just like you would normally do if you wanted to know something about your friends except now you will be doing it in a scientific manner.

This handbook will describe many of the things that will be discussed in training. It is hoped that it will be useful for you in the field if you have any questions. You should read through the book once a week,

even after you have done several interviews. Reviewing this handbook should keep you familiar with many points that you would probably otherwise forget. Remember, it is important that all of the interviewers work in as similar a manner as possible. Some of the terms used in this manual and in connection with surveys in general are included in the "Glossary" at the back of the manual. In addition, references are provided for those interested in doing further reading on various topics.

THE INTERVIEWER'S JOB IN THE SURVEY

The interviewer has a very important role in the survey. She asks the questions, records respondents' answers and is a public relations agent. The tasks of asking the questions and recording the answers will be discussed later. For now, it is sufficient to point out that these duties are not quite as simple as one might expect. The public relations part of the job is so important and deeply involved in the interview that it is discussed in connection with all other factors of interviewing. Just to give you a more complete picture, a list of factors involved in your public relations work include; your appearance, personality, approach to the interview, as well as providing information to your respondents. Even contact with people other than your respondents, such as store clerks, respondents' neighbors, and various other community members involves public relations work. That is, you represent the information seeking agency (your employers) so that the image you present to the public determines the image the public will have of your agency. As you can see, the success of the survey rests on your shoulders.

OBTAINING THE INTERVIEW

Some Things to Think About

The first and most important job of the interviewer is to get the respondents to permit you to ask them questions. Most people will be happy to talk with you. However, there will be a few individuals who may be suspicious of you and your efforts. For this reason you must be careful how you introduce the interview. In addition, you want to make a good impression for those who are willing to participate as well as present everyone the same or at least similar information.

Be prepared to expect any sort of reception when introducing the interview. In order to do this, let's try to understand why people will react differently toward you. Probably the most important thing to

Respondent may be angry, unhappy or, as will be the usual case, happy to help you.

remember is that people learn to be what they are. That is, whatever has happened to them, how and where they were raised, as well as how they are presently feeling, what has happened to them that day and what they were doing when you arrived will all affect how they will accept you.

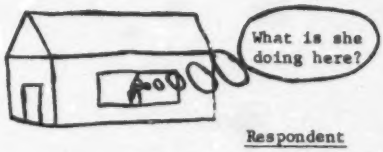
Another thing to remember is that because of their past experience people will see things differently. For example, suppose three people were looking at the figure drawn below. The first person may describe that figure as two letter W's, one the mirror image of the other. The second person may describe the figure as two M's, one the mirror image

This figure could be described as mirror images of W or M, even mirror images of 2 V's side by side; W above M or any combination. People see the same things differently because of their different past experiences.

of the other. The third person may describe this figure as two X's side by side. Still other people may describe it in several other ways. But this is a simple situation, let's think about another example. Suppose an interviewer is approaching a respondent's house. What is she thinking about? She is thinking about the interview, its purpose and the effects the survey has on the community. She sees herself as a person performing a service to the community or to society in general. The interviewer knows that she will not try to trick anyone into buying something or try to remove or give welfare assistance. She knows this because of her past experience (training, interviewing others, etc.).

What about the respondent? He knows nothing about why this particular person is approaching his door. Even if he knows the interviewer, the respondent will probably suppose anything from "she's a welfare agent" to "she's going to try to take up a collection." His past experience has told him little about why the interviewer should be approaching his door. As a result, the interviewer must first convince the respondent that she is trying to conduct a survey, not just to ask a lot of nosey questions, sell something or threaten people with taking away their income

or whatever else they may think. Some methods of going about this will be presented below.



The interviewer and respondent see the situation differently. It is the interviewer's job to see that the respondent sees it as she does.

INTRODUCING AN INTERVIEW

The three major goals in introducing an interview are:

1. Obtain the respondent's cooperation.

2. Avoid biasing the respondent's answers to your questions.

3. Create a favorable impression of yourself and the agency conducting the survey.

To achieve these goals, the respondent must understand that you are interested in what he has to say. The respondent must also be interested in discussing the questions related to the topic of the survey. In addition, the respondent must be assured that no bad consequences will result from answering the questions. Remember, at the start of the interview, the respondent's past experience has provided him nothing to make him aware of the purpose of your visit.

The following is a list of "do's" and "don'ts" and reasons for each:

1. *Don't memorize or read the introduction.* To read or give a memorized introduction would seem insincere to the respondent. It would make it more difficult for the respondent to believe you. Besides, each respondent will be different as to how much information he must have before he will cooperate.

2. *Give all respondents similar instructions as much as possible.* In any scientific study one of the most important things to do is to present each respondent with the same or a similar situation. If the situation is different, they may interpret and answer the questions in a different manner than is desired.

3. *Include the following things in the introduction:*

   a. *Introduce yourself.* Giving your name will encourage trust. The respondent will be less suspicious of anyone willing to identify herself.

   b. *Present personal identification.* A letter, card or badge will be provided indicating who you are, who is responsible

for the survey and should give the respondent some indication of the purpose of the survey. This will further encourage trust and reduce the suspicion that you are trying to sell something or are investigating the respondent for one reason or another. In addition, this will usually create a little curiosity.

c. *Tell the respondent who is conducting the survey.* How you do this depends on the instructions given you by your supervisor. He may ask you to indicate the agency only or to give the name of the agency as well as the names of the community leaders who are participating. This is to support the identification presented to the respondent. It will further create less distrust and possibly more interest.

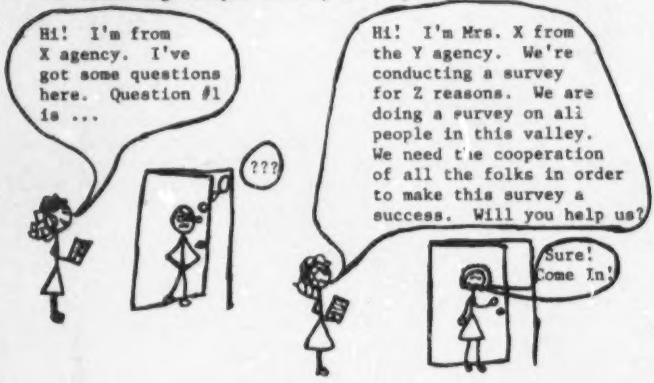
d. *Tell the respondent the purpose of the survey and what effect it will have on him.* Present the respondent with just enough information to give him a general idea of what it is all about. Be careful not to give him any information which may affect his responses to your questions. This should give the respondent enough background to insure him of your intentions. In most cases the respondent will cooperate at this point.

e. *Describe to the respondent how he was selected.* He may have been selected randomly or by some other means. If a particular respondent is still suspicious of your intentions at this point, your description of how he was selected may eliminate the suspicion that you obtained his name from a "sucker list" or the welfare rolls.

f. *Indicate whether the interview is confidential.* In telling the respondent this, it may be a good idea to give him details of what will be done with the information after it is received. Later, during the interview, it may also be a good idea to give the respondent subtle assurances of confidentiality by tearing the list of the respondents names out of the questionnaire booklet. Knowing that the survey is confidential will encourage the respondent to cooperate more freely. He won't worry about who is going to find out this information and therefore can be more honest and accurate in answering the questions.

g. *In closing the introduction pose the request for his cooperation as a plea for his help.* As has been mentioned several times before, most people will be happy to cooperate. Nevertheless, this approach in closing the introduction not only makes it difficult for the less cooperative people to resist but it also makes the respondents feel important, needed and in general, motivated

to cooperate fully. If you say for example: "We need the cooperation of everyone in the valley to make this project a success. Will you help us? This places the burden on the respondent. That is, it is easier for them to say "yes" than "no". On the positive side, the respondent has been asked to help - something that almost everyone likes to do. This approach hopefully gives the respondent a chance to contribute to the cause. In addition, this will encourage the respondent to make an effort to produce reliable responses to your questions since poor answers won't really help. The following example is only one way to do it.


Hi! I'm from X agency. I've got some questions here. Question #1 is ...
???
Hi! I'm Mrs. X from the Y agency. We're conducting a survey for Z reasons. We are doing a survey on all people in this valley. We need the cooperation of all the folks in order to make this survey a success. Will you help us?
Sure! Come In!

(Poor) (Good)

Introducing a survey is the first big step. Sufficient information must be presented in order to successfully obtain cooperation of the respondents. This is just an example and not the only way to present the introduction. The interviewer must be comfortable and natural in the presentation and the introduction may need to be modified for different individuals.

If you feel uncomfortable using that language, do it in another way. As was mentioned above, the introduction must be natural and believable. Further, you may need to modify it for different individuals. If the respondent is a slower or older person, the introduction may have to be shortened or simplified.

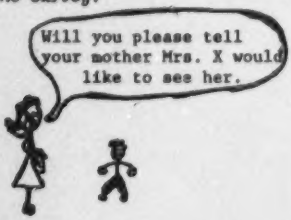
4. *The interviewer must be courteous and businesslike at all times.* Politeness creates a positive atmosphere for conducting the interview. Care must be taken that too friendly a relationship doesn't develop between the interviewer and respondent during the interview. Such a relationship will affect the answers of the respondent and disrupt the accuracy of the survey. Thus the interviewer while courteous, must also be businesslike and, beginning with the introduction, create an appropriate atmosphere for getting the interview completed correctly and efficiently.

5. *The interviewer should dress in the manner most often seen in the survey area.* There is no need to dress up when interviewing. At best, it will only make the respondent (who is usually dressed very casually) feel uncomfortable. The interviewer is more readily accepted if the respondent sees her in clothing most familiar to the community. If unusual clothing is worn by the interviewer, it may distract the respondent and/or influence his answers.

CHOOSING THE PLACE OF THE INTERVIEW

Once the respondent has agreed to the interview, the interviewer should try to find a quiet place where the respondent is out of the presence of the other household members. The most desirable interviewing situation provides a minimum of distractions. If the respondent is interrupted, his train of thought is interrupted which may cause his answers to be less accurate and complete. However, you are a guest in the respondent's house and cannot force the respondent to do as you wish. If it is impossible to get the desired interview situation, do the best you can with whatever is available. Here are some tips on how to approach this problem.

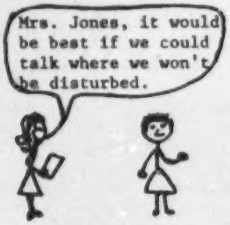
1. *Try to make contact with the respondent before introducing the survey.*



Try to contact the appropriate respondent before introducing the survey.

If the respondent has been designated by your supervisor as some particular member of the household, ask for that person by title (mother or father). The interviewer should introduce herself to whomever answers the door so that she can be properly announced to the appropriate respondent. Contacting the respondent first serves two basic purposes. It reduces the time involved in conducting the interview since the introduction would otherwise have to be repeated for the appropriate respondent. Secondly, once the respondent has agreed to the interview, the interviewer can easily ask for a quiet place to administer the questionnaire. You will be told which member of the household is the appropriate respondent during the training period.

2. *Politely request a quiet place and, if necessary, explain why you need to be alone.*



Try to find a quiet place
by suggesting it to respondent.

If the respondent and his family understand that the questionnaire can best be answered by a single individual and that for scientific reasons interruptions are undesirable, there is little doubt that they will cooperate. Don't be hesitant to suggest a quiet secluded place. The respondents won't be offended if the suggestion is politely stated.

3. *If it is impossible for the respondent to be alone, accept the situation and make the best of it.* In some cases, the respondent will be unable to provide the desired atmosphere for the interview. For example, a woman may need to supervise her young children or a farmer may be in the fields. If the situation is less than desirable, record it on a separate sheet and explain the circumstances to your supervisor when you hand in the questionnaire.

4. *If someone other than the respondent interrupts, or answers the questions, directly or indirectly, remind the family that you need to obtain answers from one individual only.* This needn't be done directly. For example, after the interrupting individual completes his statement, the interviewer can ask the appropriate respondent, "How would you answer that?" or "Could you answer that question for me please?" If the circumstances permit, and you feel comfortable at it, directly suggest that only the appropriate respondent's answer is desired. The former method is less likely to offend anyone while the latter method is more likely to produce results. Yet another indirect method is to pay attention only to the appropriate respondent, writing only his (her) answers. These techniques are appropriate for particular situations. It is up to the interviewer which one to use. However, the interviewer is cautioned to beware of possibly losing the cooperation of the respondent and his family.

WHAT TO DO WITH REFUSALS AND
WHEN NO ONE IS HOME

Some Things to Think About

As you may recall, the scientist who was studying the mileage given by various gasolines attempted to control everything so that the different distances traveled by the car was the result of differences in gasoline and nothing else. The same thing is attempted in interviewing. Suppose that an interviewer (let's call him Joe) conducts a survey from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for two weeks and ends up unable to contact 120 of the homes he was supposed to interview. After he handed in his questionnaires and the results were computed, it was found that no one has a job in Joe's area. Is this a valid, scientific fact? Indeed not! What has apparently happened is that Joe talked only with those people who are not working. This situation is similar to our scientist testing gasoline X with a Cadillac and gasoline Y with a Volkswagen (instead of using the same car with both) and concluding that gasoline Y gives better gas mileage. In this case, the differences in results could (or could not) be the result of different kinds of cars being used. In the interview situation, one can see that Joe should have returned to call on the 120 people after working hours and, similarly, our scientist should have used the same car with the two gasolines. Both failed to properly eliminate other factors influencing the results.

This leads to another point. The population sample (group in the community selected to be respondents) assigned to you was probably randomly selected. To be randomly selected means that they were selected on the basis of chance. Each person in the community was just as likely to be selected as a respondent. That is, each respondent was chosen with no

particular reason for selection. Occasionally, the entire population of the community is surveyed. In both cases it is important that as many respondents as possible be interviewed. The fewer the respondents missed by the interviewers, the less likely the chance that incorrect data will be found, such as that found by Joe. Of course, the same applies to refusals.

Suggestions for Handling Refusals and Absence of Respondent

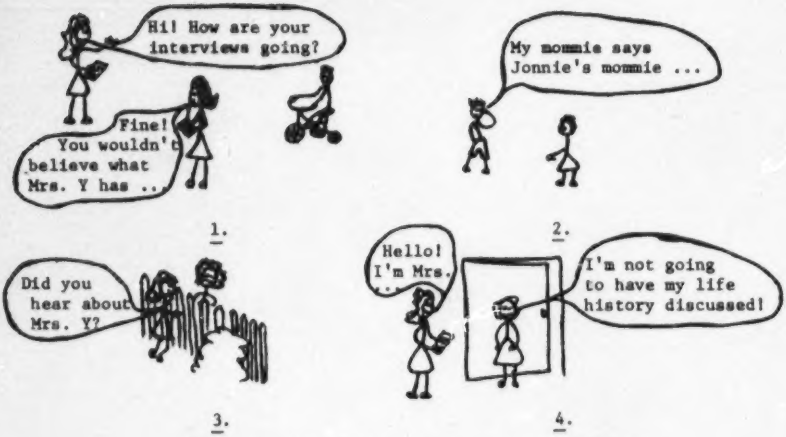
1. *Preventive measures for avoiding refusals.* Means of introducing the interview, appearance and various other factors have already been discussed. They will be mentioned again to emphasize their importance in insuring acceptance of the interview.

   a. *After knocking on the door, stand where you can be easily seen.* If the respondent has some reason to be fearful about people coming to his house (fear of visit by bill collector, social worker, government agent), making yourself visible will help the respondent feel at ease. It is sometimes helpful to take a small step back when the respondent opens the door, this helps make you appear less threatening.

   b. *Wear clothing most often seen in the area.* As was mentioned before, how you dress may influence the respondent even in accepting the interview. Once again, neither dress up too much nor dress too casually. If dressed improperly, the respondent may be less ready to believe your reason for calling on him, in addition to making him feel uncomfortable.

   c. *Be polite and pleasant.* Wear a smile when the respondent first sees you. This will give him a pleasant first impression of you and help make your whole interview situation more positive. Politeness not only adds to making the situation more pleasant, but it also helps to make the respondent feel important.

   d. *Keep your promise that the interview is confidential.* If you discuss the information about the respondents with other respondents, your family, or even with other interviewers, the word will more than likely spread through the survey population that the respondents are being publicly discussed. This, of course, will greatly increase the number of refusals. It is best not to discuss it with anyone other than your supervisor. Rumors about such personal matters start easily and are difficult to stop or deny. In connection with this, be sure you store the completed questionnaire in a covered envelope and in a place where no one can easily get it.


Hi! How are your interviews going?
Fine! You wouldn't believe what Mrs. Y has ...
1.
My mommie says Jonnie's mommie ...
2.
Did you hear about Mrs. Y?
3.
Hello! I'm Mrs. ...
I'm not going to have my life history discussed!
4.

Discussing the information you receive from the respondents is dangerous to the success of the survey. Word usually spreads rapidly and will eventually lead to many refusals. It is best not to discuss the information with anyone.

e. *Behave in a manner acceptable to the community.* If you are staying in a different community, it is important that unfavorable attention is not drawn to the interviewers. If, for example, most members of the community strongly disapprove of "violating the Sabbath" don't interview on Sunday. Further, don't appear in public in casual clothing on Sunday. It isn't necessary to actively participate in community activities (such as going to church, etc.) rather, the point is to avoid possible unfavorable impressions about yourself and the survey. Your supervisor will give you instructions about the community, its structure and some idea of what is acceptable behavior. If you are a resident of the community in which you are working, the same thing applies but to a lesser extent because your position in the area is already established. However, keep in mind your responsibility to the survey and its success.

f. *A good introduction will usually lead to cooperation of the respondent.* If you follow the advice presented above in the section on introducing the interview, there should be few, if any, refusals.

2. *If after your introduction you are refused, accept this response and try to work with their excuse to obtain an interview.* Most people will accept the interview if properly introduced. Occasionally even the best introduction may be faced with a refusal.

In many cases the refusal will be given with some sort of excuse. Some of the most common excuses will be given below along with an example of how to handle them. It would be impossible to predict all possible excuses, therefore these are to be considered as examples only and are meant to give you an idea of how to respond to the refusals.

a. *If the respondent says he doesn't have the time to do an interview, ask him when would be the most convenient time for you to return.* This does two things. It assures him that you are interested in talking with him and it turns the respondent's

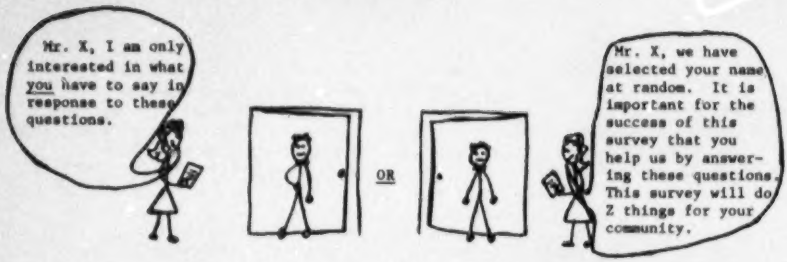
Could we meet some other time?
Incorrect
Well then, what would be a good time for me to return?
Maybe tomorrow afternoon.
Correct

If the respondent says she doesn't have time to be interviewed, do <u>not</u> ask if you may return. Ask <u>when</u> you may return.

attention toward deciding on a more convenient time to interview rather than deciding whether or not to be interviewed. The respondent has not been asked to say yes or no, rather he has been asked to pick a time. This makes it more difficult for the respondent to refuse the interview. Of course, it is not advisable to ask the respondent if you may return. That would make it easier for him to say "no" because he is making the decision of whether or not to be interviewed.

b. *If the respondent says he doesn't know much about what the interview concerns, assure him that what he has to say counts.* The respondent may be afraid to "show his ignorance". By letting him know that <u>you are not testing what he knows but rather are interested in what he has to say</u>, his fear may be reduced. At the same time, you have appealed to his pride. You have told him that you are there to listen to him.

c. *Appeal to the respondent's sense of civic duty.* This can be done by informing him, in some manner, that the success of the survey rests on his shoulders and that, if successful, the survey will lead to specific things in the community. Be sure to tell the respondent only what is really expected to happen as a result of the survey. If you stretch what is truthfully expected, the respondents could become very suspicious of the survey.


Mr. X, I am only interested in what you have to say in response to these questions.
OR
Mr. X, we have selected your name at random. It is important for the success of this survey that you help us by answering these questions. This survey will do Z things for your community.

Work with the respondent's excuse for refusal in trying to obtain his cooperation.

3. *If, after an attempt to encourage the respondent to participate, he still refuses, leave the respondent with some polite statement and report the incident to your supervisor.* There is no use in trying to force someone to cooperate. Simply tell him, with a pleasant smile, that you are sorry for taking his time and if he should change his mind, to call your headquarters. This will probably have no real effect on the respondent unless he refused for fear of your being a person dangerous to his well being. If that is the case, the respondent has been given an opportunity to "check out your story". Otherwise, there isn't much else you can do.

4. *The best preventive measure for avoiding "not at home" calls, is to call on respondents at prime times.* If interviewing female respondents, mid-mornings and afternoons are usually the best times to catch everyone at home. If interviewing males, it is usually best to work in the evenings. As you can see, it depends on who is being interviewed, the location of the population, as well as the season of the year. It is up to you, the interviewer, to make the decision as to when to do your work. Your supervisor will assist you by providing you with information about the area.

5. *If the respondent is not home when you call, a "call back" must be made at a different time.* Remember Joe's mistake and the misinterpretation it led to. If these people who are not home during your usual interviewing time are not contacted, important information may be missed. It is best to call back at a different time of day and on a different day of the week than your first call. It is possible that the respondent is regularly away from home at the time you called. Your supervisor will tell you how many times you are required to make "call backs".

6. *If unsuccessful in the first call back, check with the neighbors to find out when the respondent will be home.* Explain to the neighbor who you are and why you want to see their neighbor. Give them at least enough information about the survey to create some curiosity about it.

7. *Under certain circumstances it is best not to attempt an interview.* Just what circumstances are to be avoided is a matter of your judgement. Generally, if the family is having a big argument, or if there is some sort of emergency such as an accident or doctor's visit, do not attempt an interview. It would be impossible to maintain the respondent's attention under such circumstances. In most cases it is likely that the respondent will not be cooperative anyway.

8. *Always record refusals, call backs and any other unusual circumstances.* Since the interview situation itself may influence the responses, it is important that all unusual cases are recorded. For example, if a particular respondent gives unusual responses, to find out from your records that he happened to resist the interview may provide an explanation for his responses. If you don't record the unusual cases, it is possible that those questionnaires may lead to misinterpretations much like Joe's work did. Your supervisor will tell you how and where to record this.

Some Things to Think About

One would think that this is the simplest part of interviewing. After all, just giving the words in the right order does the trick, right? Wrong! There are many more things to consider. How you ask the question (emphasis of words, tone of voice), facial expression, how you listen, etc. will influence the respondent's answers. You must attempt to control your behavior to keep from influencing those answers. Remember, this survey is a scientific project in which each respondent is given the same questions, in the same manner, just like our scientist who tested the various gasolines on the same road with the same car and driver.

To get an idea of how easily a person can be influenced by his listener, consider the following event. Two psychologists were talking at some meeting. Dr. White was telling Dr. Blue in great detail about the work he was doing. It seems that Dr. White had a habit of pointing his finger in the air whenever he wanted to emphasize something. So, Dr. Blue decided to have some fun with Dr. White. Every time Dr. White pointed his finger in the air, Dr. Blue said, "uh huh!" The more Dr. Blue said "uh huh", the more often Dr. White pointed his finger into the air. The conversation continued for some time until Dr. White kept pointing his finger in the air more and more often! Dr. White went on for several minutes before he discovered what had happened. Dr. Blue could have done that to any number of things Dr. White said or did. For example, he could have said "uh huh" every time Dr. White said "ah". In that case Dr. White would have said "ah" several times in each statement he made.

This trick could not be done by anyone without a lot of training and a clear understanding of what caused this to happen, but this is

unimportant for our purposes here. The point to be made is that even without the training, it is easy for the interviewer to influence what the respondent says and does by saying "uh huh", "Yes", "I see", etc.; by nodding her head, looking at the respondent at particular times or when he says particular things. Part of the reason for this happening is that people tend to say what their listeners like to hear. These various things that influence the speaker (such as a respondent) tend to indicate that the listener (such as an interviewer) agrees with or likes what is being said. Since the survey is to find out what the respondents have to say about things, it is important that the interviewer doesn't influence the answers in this manner. Most people do these things unconsciously. That is, you need to be aware of these influences and to control them as much as possible. If you don't, the survey will not provide true information from the respondents but rather, will reflect your own attitudes and opinions.

On the other hand, there may be occasions in which these influences may be used to probe the respondent. By probing it is meant to encourage the respondent to give more information, usually by repeating the question. Probing is used only under special circumstances and only when a good relationship has been established between interviewer and respondent. You are cautioned not to use probes or the various influences except in the manner and under the circumstances described below. Once again, it is <u>impossible</u> to predict every situation; therefore, only the most common ones are presented below. It is up to you to use these ideas in the various circumstances you will meet in the field.

Some Points on Asking the Questions

1. *Learn to read the questions smoothly.* A poorly read question is difficult to take seriously and it distracts the respondent from thinking about the question. The best method of learning to read them smoothly is to practice reading them several times out loud to yourself and to a good listener.

2. *Read the questions in the same wording and the same order as presented on the questionnaire.* Following this rule results in more scientifically sound information for two major reasons. First, the questionnaire you will be using has been arranged and worded in such a manner as to limit any influence the questions may have on each other. For example, the questions which could possibly disturb the respondents are usually placed near the end of the questionnaire. Secondly, if the questions are presented by all of the interviewers in the same way, the respondents will all be answering the same questions under similar circumstances. If each interviewer asked the questions with different wordings and/or orders, the information gathered by the interviewers could not be combined and interpreted correctly. In the example of the gasoline study using a Volkswagen and a Cadillac, one could not conclude that the results were entirely due to the gasoline, the car, or both. This is similar to the interview situation. The various answers to a question may be the result of differences between interviewers and their style of asking questions rather than actual differences in respondents' feelings.

3. *If a question is potentially embarrassing for you or the respondent, don't change your facial expression, hesitate or stumble over the question.* Hesitation, stammering, blushing, or a change in facial expression will give the respondent a clue that some sort of embarrassing question is about to be asked. This will distract the respondent and possibly lead him to be less cooperative. To avoid this problem, practice asking the question. Moving smoothly from question to question is the most desirable method.

4. *Don't show surprise, approval or disapproval at any answer.* You are a neutral information gatherer. Don't let the respondents know what you think. That would influence the respondents answers to the remaining questions. Remember, people tend to say what their listeners approve. More specifically, there are many kinds of indications of approval. They were discussed in connection with the example of Dr. White and Dr. Blue. Review them and remember not to use them when listening to the respondents' answers.

5. *Always appear interested in what the respondent has to say.* It is important that the respondent feels you are interested in what he has to say. Your interest creates a situation in which it is easy for the respondent to talk. Looking at the respondent after you ask the question is one way of showing interest. It will be up to you to develop the most comfortable method, however, be warned not to influence your respondents like Dr. Blue did Dr. White.

6. *Adjust the pace of the interview to the respondent.* If the interview is moving too slowly for the respondent, he may become bored and lose interest in your questions. If the interview moves too rapidly, the respondent may become confused and embarrassed at not understanding the questions. It is up to you to judge the best pace of the questioning for the respondent.

7. Probing has been defined above as a repeat of the question in some form in order to obtain more information. Here are some uses and forms of probing.

   a. *Use probing techniques sparingly.* Probing is a mild form of pressuring the respondent to provide more information. In addition, it is difficult to probe effectively without offending or embarrassing the respondent. Finally, probing makes the information less reliable since you are asking the question differently. That is, you have presented a different situation to this particular respondent than to the rest of your respondents. The best rule to follow is use the probing techniques only when absolutely necessary.

   b. *Use probing when the respondent's answer is unclear, irrelevant or incomplete.* Only occasional use of probing should be necessary. Most problems occur with open-ended questions (questions requiring respondent to answer without guidelines as found in multiple choice questions). Only when you feel that the answer is inadequate is it advisable to probe.

   c. *If the respondent fails to understand the question, repeat it exactly as it is written.* This reduces the complications of interpreting a restated question. Most questionnaires are written so that almost every member of the population sample can understand it. Consequently, it is generally safe to assume that an individual who claims not to understand the question, actually has not heard it. One can see then, that this is the most desirable procedure.

   d. *If the respondent still seems unable to understand the question, rephrase it.* If you feel that the respondent still misunderstands the question (usually because he gave you an inappropriate answer), rephrase the question in words that the respondent appears to understand. Be careful not to "load the questions". To "load the question" means to provide the desired answer in stating the question. For example, "You do not approve of socialized medicine, do you?" is a "loaded question" and should be rephrased, "How do you feel about socialized medicine?"

   e. *If the respondent does not give enough information in his answer, use silence to encourage a longer answer.* If the respondent does not give you a satisfactory answer, keep your pencil in a ready position and look at him as if waiting for him to talk. Most respondents will be trying to cooperate with you but be unaware that you want a more complete answer. The use of silence presents the respondent with an uncom-

fortable situation, encouraging him to break the unpleasant feeling by interrupting the silence. In most cases the respondent will repeat and/or expand on whatever has been discussed before. Use this technique only when you have established rapport (a good relationship) with the respondent and only when necessary. This technique should be used only sparingly, if used too much it will lose its effectiveness.

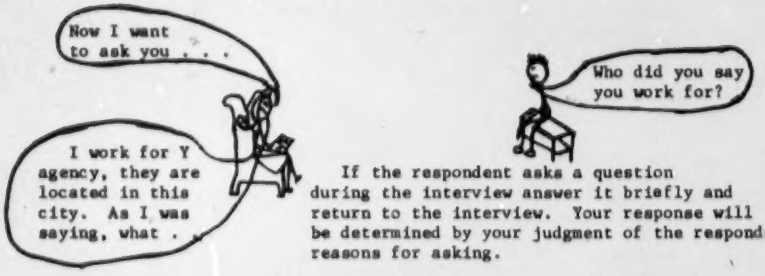
f. *If the respondent seems unsure that his answer is appropriate to the question, encourage him.* Whenever Dr. Blue said "uh huh", it encouraged Dr. White to point his finger into the air. When discussing this situation you were warned that such comments as "uh huh", "yes", "I see", as well as nodding one's head, etc., could influence the respondent's answer. However, this effect can be used for your purposes under certain conditions. If you feel that the respondent isn't sure he is giving you the information you want and if he is answering correctly, encourage him to continue by using this technique. Be aware that this is dangerous to the success of this questionnaire in that, if not careful, you may influence the respondent's answer. Fortunately, this technique will be needed only in rare cases.

g. *Record all probes.* This is important for interpretation of the information gathered in this survey. If unusual or especially useful answers require probes, it is essential to know for planning future surveys as well as for interpreting the present survey.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN THE INTERVIEWING

You may occasionally encounter special problems during the course of the survey. Some of the more common problems will be discussed along with some ideas on how to handle them. Neither the list of problems nor the suggested solutions are complete. It is a matter of judgment on your part to decide the appropriate action. Nonetheless, you should discuss potential problems with your supervisor. He may have reasons for wanting you to use a particular approach.

1. *If, during the questioning, the respondent asks you for information about yourself or the survey, answer him briefly and return to the questioning.* It is best to answer the respondent when he asks the question. If the respondent asks for information from you about the survey or yourself, answer the question briefly and return to the questionnaire. Be careful that you do not give the respondent information about the questions that may influence his answers.

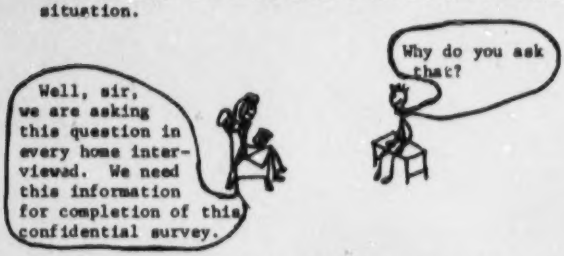


If the respondent asks a question during the interview answer it briefly and return to the interview. Your response will be determined by your judgment of the respondent's reasons for asking.

He may be asking to assure himself that you have presented yourself and your purpose truthfully. On the other hand, he may have been so busy sizing you up during your introduction that he may not have heard a word of it. Do not give any information which would affect the respondent's answers. It is best to answer questions by repeating appropriate portions of your introduction. If the respondent appears ill at ease, it is best to restate, in some indirect manner, that the survey is confidential.

2. *If the respondent hesitates or resists answering a question, reassure him that everyone is being asked the same question, that what he has to say is important and/or that the interview is confidential.* How you reassure the respondent

depends on the particular situation. The respondent may resist because he doesn't understand the question, finds the question rather embarrassing or is unsure of your purpose for asking the questions. The questionnaire may be quite long and the respondent's interest may be lagging. It is appropriate at this point to reassure him or to create more interest by repeating parts of your introduction. Depending on the situation, tell him that his cooperation is necessary for the success of the survey, everyone interviewed will be asked the same questions and/or the interview is confidential. The interviewer must fit her comments to the situation.


Why do you ask that?
Well, sir, we are asking this question in every home interviewed. We need this information for completion of this confidential survey.

If the respondent resists asking the question inform him of the confidential nature of the questionnaire and/or other parts of the introduction.

3. *Don't be too quick to accept "I don't know" as an answer.* If an individual wants to stall for time, the phrase "I don't know" is frequently used. It is usually easy to identify the reason an individual uses that phrase, but make sure the respondent doesn't know before recording it as the answer.

4. *If the respondent gets off the subject, let him know you have more questions to ask.* This should not be done directly. There are a few simple tricks that usually do the job. If the respondent talks about subjects unrelated to your questions, listen for a very short while and then interrupt at a convenient spot with comments such as "ah", "That's very interesting", "oh really?", etc.

Follow that comment with the next question. Again, it is up to you to decide when, how and what to say in interrupting. You can usually make the interruption when the individual pauses for breath. As you might guess, this is probably the most frequent problem that you will encounter. A fully co-operative respondent is frequently pleased to have a good listener to talk to. That is, you have probably established rapport with the respondent. Perhaps too well! Needless to say, care must be taken not to offend the respondent.

RECORDING THE ANSWERS

Another major role of the interviewer is recording the answers given by the respondents. The most important thing to remember is that the survey is intended to collect and to combine what the respondents say, not what the interviewer has to say or how the interviewer interprets the respondent's answers. Unfortunately, this part of the survey is one of the most frequent sources of error. Some suggestions for reducing these errors are made below. If followed, you should make few errors and provide your supervisor with accurate and unbiased (uninfluenced by your feelings or some sort of error) information.

1. *Write legibly.* After all of your efforts in obtaining and conducting the interviews, it would be a pity if your work were useless because no one could read your questionnaires. Spend the time to be sure your writing can be read.

2. *Record the answers as soon as the respondent gives them.* Don't try to remember what was said for recording later. Being the human being you are, it isn't likely that you will remember it correctly. Furthermore, your memory will tend to twist the facts in the direction of your own feelings about the subject of the response and/or your feelings about the respondent.

3. *Be sure you have recorded the responses in the correct place.* It is a common error to record the responses in the wrong place. Take the time to be sure you are recording the response for the correct person and under the correct question.

4. *On any open-ended questions, write the respondent's answer in his terms, that is quote him.* Do not attempt to write your version of what is said. It will only lead to interpretation difficulties (just like Joe's work did) and biasing of the answer in the direction of your own feelings and attitudes. Write exactly what the respondent said and place quotation marks around it. If the respondent's answer is too long and complicated for a direct quotation, it may be necessary to reduce it. In this case, use the words used by the respondent. It is a good idea to quote important parts of the answer and describe the remainder of it using the respondent's words.

5. *Error sources to be aware of.* You will probably make mistakes in recording the answers given to you. While it is desirable to keep the errors to a small number, it is understandable that errors do occur. After all, you are only human. The best that can be done in this handbook is to point out the greatest sources of error to at least make you aware of them. It is up to you to check for these errors and try to avoid them.

a. fatigue of the interviewer
b. conducting the interview too rapidly -- recording answers while asking next question
c. failure to check over questionnaire before leaving
d. failure to record answer in correct place
e. failure to listen to respondent

6. *Always use a pencil.* It is easiest to make corrections with pencil.

7. *Account for any non-responses.* Explain the reason for an unanswered question. The reasons may range from refusal to "forgot to ask". This is important information especially if a good many respondents refuse to answer a question.

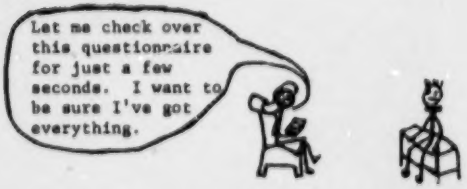
8. *Record in detail all probes, any significant events occurring during the interview, any interruptions and any important comments made by the respondent.* All information regarding answers to the questions and the interview situation can be important for the survey. Always keep in mind that the questionnaire is a scientific instrument designed to gather information. The person who made up the questionnaire wants as much information regarding the questions as possible but the respondents may provide information that was not expected. Your recording of this information could lead to some new discovery, or finding which may increase the understanding of the topic of the survey. Your help here is very important.

9. *If the respondent gives information which is difficult to record and/or code, write the answer near the question and discuss it with your supervisor.* Most of the questions you will be using will be recorded as a multiple choice. That is, you will be provided a list of possible answers and will be required to circle or underline the respondent's answer. When the respondent's answer does not fit the choices provided on the questionnaire, quote the respondent's answer and present the problem to your supervisor. He will show you how to record it.

CLOSING THE INTEVIEW

After you have asked the last question, leave the home as soon as possible so that the next interview can be started. It is important, however, that you leave the respondent with a pleasant feeling about the interview in particular and the survey in general. If a respondent is treated pleasantly, he will be more likely to give a favorable report concerning the survey to his friends. The success of this survey depends on a high degree of cooperation from the respondents. As a result, if the survey develops a bad reputation for whatever reason, a high.refusal rate will result. Below are listed the necessary steps to closing the interview.

1. *Review the questionnaire in the presence of the respondent and ask him any incompleted questions.* Indicate in your own words that you want to be sure that you have correctly recorded all the information. The respondent should be assured that this procedure will take only "a couple of minutes". This is your chance to make sure all the answers are recorded in the correct place on the questionnaire, are consistent, legible, etc. This step is required under any circumstances. If an answer is found



Immediately after the last question has been asked, review the questionnaire to be sure all questions have been answered, all numbers have been properly placed, etc. This is the most important step to reducing errors.

to be incomplete or incorrect when you hand in the forms, the interviewer may have to make a return visit to complete the questionnaire.

2. *Ask the respondent if he wants more information.* Your supervisor will tell you what and how much information to provide the respondents. Do not provide the respondent information which may influence other respondents' answers, or talk about other respondents. Be sure you provide him only truthful information. Always remember the respondent may talk with his friends whom you may interview later.

3. *Thank the respondent for his help and tell him you enjoyed talking with him.* This, of course, is only a suggested approach. Use whatever is most comfortable for you. The major point to remember is that the closing must be pleasant.

Always leave the respondent with a pleasant feeling about the survey. Take the time to properly thank him.

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Call back - A return visit to a home by an interviewer after a first visit at which time the respondent was not at home.

Code - In your questionnaire there are several answers which you record by indicating the number of the response listed under the question. This number is the code for the answer the respondent has given.

Confidential - Used here to refer to the fact that the information you obtain from the respondents will be kept secret by you and the members of your survey team. The information sought in a survey concerns the whole community. Therefore, information about individual families is not analyzed by itself.

Head of house - The working person who brings home the major part of the family's income.

Interview - The process of an agent (interviewer) of the information-seeking organization asking more or less structured questions of some group of systematically selected individuals (respondents). This process may occur anywhere from an office of the interviewer, on the street, to the home of the respondent.

Interviewee - See respondent.

Minority group - Persons differing from the major portion of the population because of skin color, religion, customs, or language.

Non-respondent - Pre-selected respondent who is not interviewed because of his refusal to cooperate or because the interviewer was unable to contact him.

Population - A collection of people having some particular characteristic. For example, the population of the United States is the collection of people living in the United States; the population of Kentucky doctors is all doctors living in Kentucky.

Population sample - Group selected from the population (usually determined by communities) to be interviewed.

Pre-test - A small survey conducted before the actual full-scale survey generally for the purpose of checking the questionnaire for errors and difficulties.

Probe - Obtaining further response from the respondent for clarification of his answer, to obtain more information, or to insure a correct interpretation of the respondent's answer. Probes can be done in several different ways. See the section on "Asking the Questions".

Questionnaire - A form containing a more or less structured group of questions which are asked by the interviewers.

Random Selection - The selection of respondents such that every member of the survey population is equally likely to be chosen.

Rapport - A good relationship between persons. An interviewer is said to have rapport with the respondent when the respondent has confidence in the interviewer and is willing to cooperate.

Ratio - The relationship of one quantity to another. For example, the ratio of the population of the world to the population of the U.S. is 3 billion to 200 million, or as expressed as a ratio 30:2 or 15:1.

Refusals - A shorthand way of saying "people who refused to be interviewed".

Residence - Where the respondent considers his home to be. Legal residence is defined as the place where the respondent is able to vote.

Respondent - (Interviewees) People who are being interviewed.

Sample - A representative part of the whole.

Spouse - Husband or wife of the respondent.

Survey - A process of conducting interviews on a specified sample of a given population.

Survey population - The population of all peoples residing in the area in which the survey is being conducted.

Unemployed - A person not presently working, but not retired or disabled from working, and who usually works. Thus, a housewife who doesn't usually work is not considered unemployed if she stays home.

Availability of this material is supported by federal grant funds awarded by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to the Ohio Valley Regional Medical Program. Content represents the opinions and conclusions of the responsible author but does not necessarily reflect policy of DHEW or OVRMP.

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